

ADDITIONAL LAND, BUREAU OF STANDARDS,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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JANUARY 19, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the  
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Mr. ELLIOTT, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,  
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 4548]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 4548) authorizing the Secretary of Commerce to acquire, by condemnation or otherwise, a certain tract of land in the District of Columbia for the enlargement of the present site of the Bureau of Standards, having duly considered the same, hereby make report of it to the House and with the recommendation that the bill do pass.

The strip of land, the purchase of which is proposed by this bill, is slightly less than 8 acres in area and is bounded on the east by Connecticut Avenue, on the west by the bureau land, on the north by Van Ness Street, and on the south by Tilden Street (extended). The bill limits the cost to \$173,117, which is at the rate of 50 cents a square foot, and is considered a very reasonable price, inasmuch as land directly across the street from it, it is understood, sold at about double this price for the erection of homes something over a year ago. In this connection, the following letters from the assessor of the District of Columbia to the Director of the Bureau of Standard are quoted:

WASHINGTON, June 6, 1923.

Dr. GEORGE K. BURGESS,  
*Director of the Bureau of Standards,*  
*Washington, D. C.*

DEAR SIR: In reply to your letter of May 23d, I will state that to the best of my knowledge and belief the land on the west side of Connecticut Avenue just below Van Ness Street is worth 50 cents per square foot for apartment house purposes.

During the last year a great advance in all land in this locality has been brought about by the erection of apartment houses between Van Ness Street and the Connecticut Avenue Bridge, and it is hard to tell just how far bids for good apartment house sites will advance land prices during the next six months.

Respectfully,

WM. P. RICHARDS, Assessor.

WASHINGTON, October 7, 1924.

Dr. GEORGE K. BURGESS,

*Director of Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C.*

DEAR SIR: In reply to your letter of September 29, I will state that I have no reason to change my estimate of 50 cents per square foot and that I have recently shown this letter to the Board of Assistant Assessors and they think 50 cents a liberal estimate of value.

Respectfully yours,

WM. P. RICHARDS, *Assessor.*

The Bureau of Standards is the finest physical laboratory in the world, and not only is it a scientific and technical institution devoting its time to purely academic investigations and research, but the work that it is doing to-day and has been doing for many years in a practical way is invaluable to the business world and to the people of this country and can not be overestimated. The land, the acquisition of which is sought by this bill, is absolutely necessary for the future development of the bureau as well as to provide proper means of ingress and egress to the present property. As a matter of economy the land should be acquired immediately, as the value of real estate in this section of the city is rapidly increasing, and to wait until it is built up with dwellings or apartment houses would make the cost practically prohibitive.

The following, which is taken from a memorandum prepared by an official of the bureau, contains full information as to this land and the necessity for its immediate purchase:

## PURPOSE

The proposed purchase of the strip of land which now separates the bureau from Connecticut Avenue—

(a) Will complete the natural hill site originally selected for the Bureau of Standards.

(b) Will enable the bureau to develop a suitable roadway entrance to the bureau grounds over Government-owned land instead of over private property, as at present.

(c) Will permit the normal extension of present work and growth of new work already overcrowding the hill-top group of laboratories.

(d) Will save the expense involved in delay since land in this vicinity is rapidly rising in value for several reasons stated below.

Building operations are critically close to the bureau. It would be regrettable if delay in purchase or actual extension of private building into the remaining tract should make its cost prohibitive. After personal inspection of the strip, the chairman of three appropriation committees of the House of Representatives of different sessions of Congress have stated that the Government ought to acquire this remaining strip for the bureau, as a matter of good business. The necessity for the purchase has become acute for the reasons indicated below, and the President on recommendation of the Director of the Bureau of the Budget has approved the transmission of the request for authorization for its purchase.

## RISE IN LAND VALUES

The situation is now acute. Within the year, a rapid rise in land values has begun. This makes it important to acquire the remaining strip while land values are still moderate. For the first time the assessor for the District and the land company are in accord as to a reasonable market valuation. This valuation (50 cents per square foot) is less than one-half the assessment valuation of the property across Connecticut Avenue opposite the strip to be purchased.

The increase in estimated market value compared with that of one year ago has three causes:

(a) An unprecedented demand has arisen for apartment-house sites along Connecticut Avenue—a new and unexpected turn for a residential suburban district.

(b) Actual apartment house building operations have reached as far north as the tract recommended for purchase.

(c) The increased demand for individual dwellings in this vicinity has resulted in the construction and sale of a block of houses which has just been erected on Connecticut Avenue facing the tract required for the bureau.

The rise in land values will continue during the next few years from these causes and also because of the increase in travel comfort from the several miles of concrete roadbed now being provided by Congress for the interval along Connecticut Avenue near the bureau. The extent of this value rise is forecast by valuation history of the Wardman Park property (not even fronting on the avenue) which increased 400 per cent in market valuation in the past four years. A half mile nearer the bureau it is understood a section is open for business purposes selling for \$3 or more per square foot for avenue frontage property. Finally, land directly opposite the site needed for the bureau carries a valuation exceeding \$1 per square foot. The land company is disposed to be fair and we can not reasonably ask them to hold land indefinitely (which is so well adapted to residence or apartment-house location) at a time when the demand for such locations is at a peak. In fact, the company requests a decision so that it can plan the disposition of the land.

#### NECESSITY FOR EARLY PURCHASE

The main roadway entrance to the administrative building and to the principal group of bureau laboratories associated with it is now through private property and the company requests that it be released for sale. It is in the interest of economy to acquire this remaining tract at once. This will complete the natural site planned for the bureau from the outset and will permit the development of suitable entrance roadways and walks over Government land. Prompt purchase will save the Government an amount equivalent to the total estimate now submitted.

The Secretary of Commerce is strongly in favor of this proposition, as is evidenced by his letter to the acting chairman of your committee relative to H. R. 4548, which is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,  
Washington, January 10, 1925.

MR. RICHARD N. ELLIOTT,  
*Acting Chairman Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,  
House of Representatives.*

DEAR MR. ELLIOTT: May I invite your attention to the pending legislation providing for the purchase of strip of land needed to complete the site of the Bureau of Standards. Building operations are critically close to the bureau and land values are rising, and the case has become urgent.

This strip of land now separates the Bureau of Standards from Connecticut Avenue and its purchase will complete the natural hill site originally selected for the bureau. It will also permit the natural growth of new work and a normal extension of the present work which is already crowding the hill-top group of laboratories. It will enable the bureau to develop a suitable roadway entrance over Government-owned land instead of over private property. The only vehicle entrance to the principal group of buildings at present is the privately owned Pierce Mill Road, over the land recommended for purchase. Congress is now considering the recommendation from the District Commissioners calling for the closing of this private road.

We can not reasonably ask the land company to hold land so well adapted to residence location. In fact the company has already had offers for the property to be used as an apartment house location. The necessity for its immediate purchase is therefore now acute.

For the first time the assessor for the District and the land company are in accord on a proposed purchase price, one-half the present market value of nearby land. Prompt purchase will save the Government an amount equivalent to the total estimate now submitted since land in this vicinity is rapidly rising in value.

The Director of the Budget and the President upon my recommendation have approved the purchase, as shown in the attached letter from the Director of the Budget. I may add that the chairmen of three successive appropriation committees of the House of Representatives, after personal inspection, have stated

that the Government ought to acquire this remaining strip for the bureau. May I urge that the time has come when this should, from every point of view, be done at once.

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT HOOVER.

BUREAU OF THE BUDGET,  
Washington, D. C., January 18, 1924.

The SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I have a letter from the Director of the Bureau of Standards, written by authority of the Acting Secretary of Commerce, requesting that he be advised as to whether or not certain legislation proposed by your department is in conflict with the financial program of the President. The drafts of legislation propose that authority be granted the Secretary of Commerce as follows:

1. To acquire a certain tract of land for the enlargement of the present site of the Bureau of Standards, at a cost not to exceed \$173,117.
2. To construct a suitable power plant building for the Bureau of Standards at a cost not to exceed \$200,000.
3. To acquire by purchase or gift a suitable site and construct thereon a building for a master track scale and test car depot and the installation therein of the master track scale at a cost not to exceed \$50,000.

I have presented this matter to the President, who has instructed me to advise you that the legislation which you propose is not in conflict with his financial program provided that the legislation pertaining to the power house and the master track scale will not involve the necessity of any appropriation either during this current or the next fiscal year.

I am returning all papers herewith.

Sincerely yours,

H. M. LORD, *Director.*

Your committee considers this a very meritorious measure and urges early and favorable action thereon by the House.

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